

ANNUAL PARISH REPORT OF PEMBRIDGE PARISH 2014

Held Wednesday 7th May, 2014 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall

1. Parish Council Chairman's Report 2013/14 – Cllr. G. Evans

This year the Council has again held eleven ordinary meetings. The Parish Council meets every month (other than August) and a notice and agenda are always posted on the Parish Council notice board (on the wall of the Red Lion) at least three days before each meeting. Members of the Parish are more than welcome to attend and although they may not be permitted to take part in any debate, there is always session for Parishioners to comment or ask questions.

Since my last report, there have been no changes to the members of the Parish Council.

Pembridge is an active and relatively busy Parish Council, which places a heavy workload on our Parish clerk, Mrs Heather Harding. On behalf of the Council, I thank her for her support and for all of the work that she has done this year.

In the year to 31 March, 2014 the Council held the precept at £18,000 and details of the income and expenditure figures will appear on the Council website: (www.pembridgeparishcouncil.gov.uk) after the external audit has been completed. For the year to 31 March, 2015, the Council has yet again held the precept at £18,000 and more detail will be made available on the website. The 2015 precept figure is once again lower than the anticipated spending for the year and any deficit will be met by reducing the reserves held.

Each year, before being submitted for external audit, the Parish Council records undergo an internal audit. I am very pleased that Mr Keith Douglas has agreed to continue in his appointment as our internal auditor. The appointment is an honorary post for which Mr Douglas receives no financial reward and I am pleased to record our gratitude.

The Parish Council has had another busy year, dealing with around 20 planning applications and responding to consultations on school transport and changes to the fire service. We have also made progress towards producing a neighbourhood plan. The neighbourhood plan is being developed by a sub-group made up of some Parish Councillors and parishioners and is chaired by Andrew Pace, who is vice chairman of the Parish Council. This is a very demanding and time consuming task and my thanks go to all concerned.

A few other points of note. Pembridge has been accepted onto the Parish Footpaths Scheme and received a grant of £1,000 to be used towards maintenance of footpaths within the parish. The Parish Council has funded a clean up of the War Memorial and repairs to the children's playground. Details relating to all of these items and more can be found in the minutes of Parish Council meetings, which are posted on the parish council website (at www.pembridgeparishcouncil.gov.uk). The website is very well maintained on behalf of the Parish Council by Bob Pierce and it contains a wealth of information, which is sadly underused. So please, if you have never visited the website, make it a priority to do so.

On a sad note, we were all shocked by the sudden death of our longstanding Parish Warden, Chris Buchan. Chris, who collapsed and died at his home last October, brought his own unique character to the role and the Council decided not to seek a replacement.

On a far more cheerful note, Pembridge has had an outstanding year both locally and nationally. The Pride in Pembridge Group has guided us to local and national awards. Not to be outdone, the local shop has collected its fair share of awards. My congratulations go to all concerned.

Finally, some more thanks. Thank you to the volunteers who help to keep the Parish running smoothly; to the teams of parishioners who involve themselves in the erection of Christmas trees and lights; to the members of the Pride in Pembridge Group who are doing magnificent work in making the village look attractive; to the Good Neighbour Scheme for providing a such valuable service. Thank you to Tony Norman who continues as tree warden and importantly, as our flood warden. Thank you to Bob and Carrie Pierce who until recently were volunteer editors of Pembridge Parish News and thanks to Clare Evans, who has taken over the role of editor. Further thanks to Bob Pierce for looking after the Parish Council website. Thanks to Philip Rogers, who is our local correspondent for the Hereford Times and don't forget to contact him if you wish to get anything publicised.

My personal thanks go to the vice-chairman, Andrew Pace, and to all of my fellow Councillors who put in untold hours of work for no reward. The amount of time that they give and their dedication to the local community often goes unnoticed by those they serve.

2. Police Report – CSO Dick Alford

During the last 12 months there have been 19 recorded crimes in Pembridge, comprising: 5 Burglaries at other buildings (not residential), 2 reports of Criminal damage, and 12 Thefts.

CSO Alford thanked the Parish Council for allowing him to come and speak at its meetings.

The 'PACT' meetings have been held regularly on a Thursday every 5 weeks in The Steppes Shop between 11 and 11.30 am. Thanks were passed to Gary and Mark for allowing the meetings to be held there. The next PACT meeting will be held on 15th May. It is an ideal opportunity for any low key policing matters to be reported or discussed.

On 22nd May the new High Sheriff will be launching his new initiative, which will focus on Rural Crime.

The Crime Prevention Committee has been trialling alarms, and people will have the opportunity to purchase them – promotional posters are available.

3. Pembridge CE School Report by Headteacher – Miss K. Finney

Pembridge CE Primary School currently has 82 children on roll, with a further 3 children set to join the school in the Summer Term. Numbers have fluctuated over the past 24 months and we have found that when some families have moved from the area their housing has not been taken up by another family. Unfortunately, the relatively high cost of local housing does seem to inhibit some family buyers.

The school, in spite of its drop in numbers, continues to be a happy, successful and exciting place to be. The children are taught as usual in four classes, by a staff consisting of 3 full time teachers, 2 part time teachers and 5 teaching assistants. Mrs Biddle is the school office manager and in addition we have a caretaker and two lunchtime supervisors. We employ 2 specialist sports coaches who work with the children for two days a week to promote excellent sport across the school. There are also two peripatetic music teachers who work with individual children to learn a variety of musical instruments including the violin, flute and guitar.

This term the school has had a new set of wall bars installed into the school hall. These were partly funded by the Kingspan Trust and from our Sport Premium grant from the government. The children love climbing on the bars and have enjoyed developing their gymnastic skills. The Sport premium funding has also been used to give all the teachers some training in developing their skills in teaching gymnastics.

The Parent Teachers and Friends Association (PTFA) continue to work hard raising funds and supporting the school. This term they paid for the playground to be marked out with a netball court, short tennis court and games grid. The children have had lots of fun using the markings and the court has already been used in a netball tournament.

The children have been enjoying plenty of sporting activities during the course of the year. They have taken part in swimming lessons at Lucton Pool, tag rugby, football, netball and gymnastic sessions at school. There are also a variety of sports based after school clubs on offer to all children from Y1 and above. The school have been involved in various friendly and competitive sports fixtures locally. For example the Tag Rugby team recently won the Plate final at the Luctonians Carghill Tagfest competition. School has also hosted two mini tournaments for our local schools.

Pembridge CE Primary School continues to have strong links with our local high school, Lady Hawkins' School in Kington. This year children have visited LHS for various sports events and more recently for a wonderful "Sing in Spring" music festival. At the festival the children were joined by Eardisley, Kington and Almeley primary schools as well as pupils from LHS. The children sang a range of beautiful songs and took part in an African drumming and dance session. Class 3 children, recently took part in a Gospel Singing project with the Birmingham Gospel Choir. This culminated in an amazing concert at the Courtyard Theatre in Hereford when the children performed on stage to a packed audience. Later in the year Class 4 children will be returning to the Courtyard to perform a version of William Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream". The children have been working on the play at school during the Spring Term with a drama expert from the Courtyard.

A highlight of the year has been a project to run a Pop Up Restaurant for one night only from the school hall. Class 3 were given a grant from the Welsh Food Trust for the project. They were involved in planning the menu, sourcing ingredients and draw prizes, writing advertisements, selling tickets and preparing and cooking the food. The theme was local produce and the 3 course dinner, which was cooked by parents Jill Williams and Sarah Norman and Gary from the Olde Steppes, was served to over 50 guests. The menu consisted of a Monkland cheese and leek tart to start, cow or allotment pie for main and a choice of Pembridge Mess or Exploding Apple and Blackcurrant Crumble for dessert. The children waited on tables and also took drink orders for mocktails and a provided a cheeseboard to delighted customers. Over £1000 was raised by the event; some money will be put aside to allow another class to experience this wonderful opportunity to run their own business. We are really grateful to the local community and businesses for their generous support of the event as it meant a great deal to the children.

The Summer Term is also likely to be busy and will see the usual events of Sports Day and the Y6 residential to Red Ridge Activity centre. We also have classes involved in Farm to Fork visits to Tillington Farm and a Y6 day trip to London to look forward to. Pembridge CE Primary School has been asked to take part in village commemorations for the centenary of the outbreak of WW1 and will be providing artwork for a display in church, planting poppies and have some children representing the school at the church service on 3rd August.

Academically children are doing well and the majority of children are on track to make expected or better progress for their age groups by the end of the academic year. The school is likely to be inspected by Ofsted from the Summer Term onwards as our last inspection was in May 2010. Ofsted currently operate a no notice policy, which means that an inspector will announce the inspection is due at midday on one day and arrive at the school to begin the inspection process the following day. It is likely that we would be inspected by one Inspector over a period of two days. There are also major changes to the education system, including a new National Curriculum and assessment process, which begin to come into effect from September 2014. The school staff are working hard to prepare for the changes.

The school has been involved in working with the University of Worcester to assist trainee teachers. We have had students on teacher training placements in the autumn, spring and summer terms. We have also offered work experience placements to high school students, NVQ and degree students.

We are grateful to many members of the Pembridge community who have been a great support to the school in many ways and hope that these relationships are strengthened and continue for the benefit of the children.

4. Village Hall Report – Cllr. Mrs. C. Evans (Read by the Chairman)

The Village Hall has been well used during the year however the income from hire of the hall was down on the previous year by around £650. We have lost proceeds from Whist and look like we may shortly lose Mums and Tots as the numbers are currently very low. Pre-School however would like to book the hall for a Tuesday morning, it was agreed that a trial of this would take place for the last half of the Summer Term.

Over the past 12 months a new Oil Tank and Boiler have been purchased and installed at the Village Hall. The new boiler has seen a saving of over £1200 on oil over the year, which just proves that the old boiler was definitely in need of replacing and the new one is a lot more efficient. The Hall has also been redecorated and a new floor put down in the gents toilets.

PIPS have recently tidied up the area in front of Pre-School's fence by creating a border which will be filled with perennial, low maintenance plants and 2 climbing roses to train over the fence.

Following the removal of the large glass recycling bins by Herefordshire Council and the replacement of these with some green wheelie bins there were initially some problems with over full bins but this now seems to have been resolved and the Parish Council have agreed to provide a hard standing area with a bund to contain the wheelie bins so that the Village Hall does not need to lose a car parking space and the area is kept tidy.

The problem with parking on the grass area to the front of the hall seems to have been stopped now with the installation of 10 oak parking bollards kindly provided by Border Oak. However concerns have been raised about the safety of general parking at the hall on a Monday night when the auction is taking place, Dick Alford has been made aware of the concerns and is going to monitor it.

The prices for hire of the hall have remained the same since September 2011, with the income from hire of the hall down on previous years and the Hall actually making a loss of £679.99 this year, it was agreed by the committee that a small raise in the hire charge would be prudent. Lists of the new rates are available from Sarah Parkinson and came into effect from 1st April 2014.

I think it is important that Parishioners realise the Village Hall needs to be run as a business as it does not get any money from outside sources and relies solely on income from hire of the hall. Although general funds are fine at the moment that could quite easily change in the future so it is prudent to take action now.

Sarah Parkinson, Secretary and Joyce Price, Treasurer do an awful lot of work voluntarily to make sure that the hall runs efficiently. This time last year the first advert was placed for a replacement for Joyce as after 26 years she felt it was time to hand over the reins – they are still waiting for someone to reply! I think this just emphasises that it is not that unrealistic to think that at some point in the future the Village Hall Committee may have to pay someone to do the Treasurers role which would eat into the general funds rapidly and means that they need to act now and do all that they can to encourage new hirers and work with current hirers to retain their regular business.

5. Pride in Pembridge Group/In Bloom Report – Cllr. A. Stokes

2013 was a very enjoyable and successful year for the Pride in Pembridge group, and our efforts were well rewarded.

When we established PIPs in 2011, our sole aim was to enhance and improve the visual and environmental aspects of the village on a year round basis. The recognition by way of awards is a bonus, but nevertheless much appreciated.

We won Gold in the National Britain in Bloom campaign, and won best in UK village category. This was mentioned by the judges as a remarkable achievement because it was our first entry into the National campaign.

We were also awarded Gold in the Heart of England campaign.

We were voted Environmental Champions in the Pride of Herefordshire awards, and again their overall winner.

We held a most successful Open Garden weekend in June, which was well attended and enjoyed by all visitors.

Our thanks to all those parishioners who participated, and of course our thanks to all the parishioners who, whilst not directly involved with PIPs, made great efforts to ensure their frontages looked at their best.

Our thanks also to all the businesses and individuals within the village that made generous donations and of course the Parish Council.

Looking forward to 2014, we have already made efforts to enhance the village green, clearing some of the brambles and vegetation along the river-bank.

We will continue to maintain the conservation area and have applied for funding to extend the boardwalk, We will be planting wildflowers, hopefully with assistance from some of the schoolchildren in the meadow area.

The group have set some bollards in front of the village hall here to keep people off the grass, and have planted a floral border in front of the fence.

The almshouses front gardens will be maintained as we did last year, to give wonderful colour to that most photographed site.

We have some new village gateway signs to be put up to replace the outdated signs at the east and west end of the village. We are awaiting final sign off from the Ministry of Transport, before we get them made.

We have sown poppy seeds at the war memorial and in the churchyard.

We have a plan to establish a small flock of sheep in the churchyard, and we will maintain the moat as a managed natural habitat.

Our weekly routine work will continue, litter picking, tidying, weeding and planting.

To help pay for some of this we are planning a summer family extravaganza, (well a barbecue) on the millennium meadow on a date yet to be agreed .

We will be entering the RHS Heart of England in Bloom campaign this year, with a judging date in early July.

6. Pembridge Amenity Trust Report – Cllr. G. Evans

The last year has again been a quiet one with no major projects currently underway. Nonetheless, I would like to thank my fellow trustees for their input and support throughout the year. In particular, I would like to thank Mrs. Wendy Douglas who is honorary treasurer of the Trust and Mrs. Jen Myers who is honorary secretary.

Market Hall

As required by the ongoing maintenance plan, we arranged for the timbers of the building to be treated to prevent woodworm infestation. Unfortunately, we were not able to undertake the planned work on the cobbles which were installed to catch the rainwater run-off, but hopefully this can be revisited this year. The cobbles are set in traditional lime mortar, which is not a very durable material and they now need to be re-pointed.

Car Park & Toilets

The lease of the car park and toilets from Herefordshire Council is scheduled to run for another 11 years, with an expiry date of 15 March, 2025. The running costs of the car park and toilets are underwritten by the Parish Council.

The operation of toilets and car park has been relatively trouble free.

Millennium Meadow

There is nothing to report.

Bell Tower

There is nothing to report. Our continued thanks go to Mr Klein, who undertakes the regular task of winding the clock.

7. Parish Footpath Officer's Report – Cllr. P. Rogers

Since the adoption of the county's P3 scheme we are able to pay for our own contractors to carry out certain remedial works previously carried out by Amey / Balfour Beatty.

This wasn't being carried out because Pembridge and other country parishes represent a very low priority.

This year contracts have been placed for remedial works in the Noke Lane area.

Bridges have been replaced in the Lowe Farm area and Balfour Beatty has been charged with clearing a large footpath in Marston. This has yet to be carried out.

Further works need to be carried out to maintain the footpaths.

I am always grateful to be made aware of any problems and indeed any help to walk and help to keep paths to a good standard is also welcome.

8. Pembridge United Charities Report for 2013 – PC Representative: Cllr. D. Owens

This report covers the period 1st January to 31st December 2013

Income and Expenditure:

Total Income for the year	£11,791
Total Expenditure	£7,686
Nett	£4,105

Almshouse Occupancy:

At the start of 2013, 6 single bedroom and 3 double bedroom houses were occupied.

During March, one single and one double houses were vacated and in June, 2 further singles became vacant. At the end of the year 4 singles and 1 double were vacant.

There are plans to refurbish Duppa Almshouses imminently, and these are about to be submitted.

Almshouse Charges:

Throughout the year, charges remained unaltered as follows:

Single Bedroom £25.00 per week for almspeople and £87.50 per week for tenants (non alms)
Double Bedroom £37.50 per week for almspeople and £125.00 per week for tenants (non alms).

Trustees:-

Mrs. Clare Price, Reverend Brenda Jacobs, Mrs. Barbara Norman, Dr. David Griffith
Mr. David Owens, Mr. Richard Smith, Mr. Richard Gwilliam, Mr. Garfield Evans

Clerk:

Mr. Michael Coleburn continued as clerk to the trustees.

Charity Address:

Mr. M. Coleburn, Jubilee Cottage, Upper Hardwick, Pembridge. HR6 9HE
Telephone: 01544 320115 Email: pembridgecharities@live.co.uk

Charity Registration:

Registered Number: 216294

9. Parish Council Website Report – Mr. R. Pierce (Read by the Chairman)

Site address: www.pembridgeparishcouncil.gov.uk

A new version of the site went live in January. The changes are mostly behind the scenes with the coding now in HTML5 and Javascript making the site accessible from all mobile platforms. The visible changes include parish census data, a boundary map, and an events list. There is also a better presentation of previous minutes and other reports. The new coding makes editing easier so that notices can be added quickly. It is intended to add a page giving details of progress on the Neighbourhood Plan in the near future.

Statistics from the server logs are not able to distinguish clearly between automated and human visitors but it seems that use of the site by real people is up; perhaps up to 20 per day. The top three search sites from which visitors arrive at ours are google.co.uk, baidu.com and bing.com. The second of these is a Chinese language search site which didn't figure at all last year. In April there were 22 visits via baidu.com.

Our website provides access to Council minutes going back to January 2007, details of how the precept is allocated and also includes the Pembridge Parish News going back to the January 2007 edition. The site also gives the Pembridge surgery opening times and emergency contact details, times for the mobile Post Office service, a link to the local bus timetables on the Herefordshire website and the Police surgery times. On the site you can register to receive agendas by email in advance of each Council meeting.

10. Lengthsman Scheme – Cllr. A. Stokes

The budget for the Lengthsman Scheme for the year 2013-2014 was £4230.00 which equates to £90 per km.

The official title of the scheme is 'Parish Councils Minor Highways Maintenance Initiative, so we have approx. 47km of minor roads within this parish.

Administration costs are 10% of total budget £423.00.

I am pleased to say that the same grant will be allocated for 2014-15.

The lengthsman has completed an agreed programme of routine drainage work throughout the parish, and other works as identified by parishioners throughout the year. This includes drainage work near Waggoners Cottage, near the Leen, in Broxwood, and the lane leading down towards Luntley from Barrow Leasowe etc.

I am informed by Balfour Beatty that there is a plan to implement some improvements to the Lengthsman Scheme, and these are being piloted in several parishes across the county. The results of these options will be provided by Balfour Beatty in due course.

11. Good Neighbour Scheme – Mrs. P. Stokes

It is a pleasure to report another successful year for the Pembridge Good Neighbour Scheme.

This is our 3rd year of project and we have a volunteer force of 16. We have been involved in many various activities from dog walking, shopping, fetching prescriptions to name but a few and have delivered over 128 hours volunteer time which can be broken down into 40 separate requests. We have also given 47 hours volunteer time hosting the Coffee Mornings.

The monthly Coffee morning held in the Village Hall has proved to be successful with numbers growing slowly. We aim to continue with these for the following year and our thanks go to the other groups in the Parish that have contributed their time also.

Word of the Pembridge Good Neighbour Scheme is spreading and we have received requests to help set up schemes in Yarpole, Clehonger and advice given to Eardisland. I was invited by the Community Development Officer of Herefordshire Council to deliver a presentation on our Scheme to other Parish Councils and a wide variety of community groups.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Parish Council for its ongoing support of the scheme and to all of the volunteers who give their time so freely.

12. Shobdon Airfield Noise Abatement Group – Cllr. P. Rogers

All incoming and regular users of the airfield are given copies of the noise restriction areas and these are detailed on the airfield's web site.

Infringements of the flight restriction areas around Pembridge, Noke Lane and The Leen when reported to the airfield by phone, e mail or letter are logged.

There has been a marked reduction of incidents of complaints regarding infringements of the areas of flight exclusion as evidenced by the very small numbers of complaints that have been recorded by the Airfield. In particular the amount of flying by helicopters has dramatically reduced due to the completion of teaching contracts, as has the incidence of helicopter noise.

There have been some incidences of late of SAS helicopters flying in the area and the Electricity Boards' maintenance helicopters have been in evidence as has the Air Ambulance.

The next Noise Abatement meeting will be held at the airfield at 6.00pm on July 15th 2014.

13. Ward Councillor's Report – Cllr. R. Phillips

Once again our communities shone both locally and nationally. Pembridge won RHS National Britain in Bloom Award and the PIPs group (Pride in Pembridge) won the overall Pride of Herefordshire award for their hard work around the village. Lyonshall who entered in Bloom for the first time received a County silver award. The Olde Stepps in Pembridge won the Countryside Alliance regional award and was Highly commended nationally for their Shop and tearoom.

This year we welcomed Ian and Pauline Sortees who took over the much valued Shobdon Shop from Martin and we saw the re opening and royal visit to Shobdon Church in January of The Prince of Wales. The Princess Royal in May visited our largest employer at Kingspan to open their new production line.

The Community of Lyonshall continue to campaign to retain and re open the Royal George and have fought off the owners planning applications twice in the last 12 months.

This year sees the beginning of the commemoration of the first World War and all the main parishes are including the upkeeping of their War Memorials.

Highways

The state of our local roads remains one of my biggest concerns and this year saw a change of contractors in September from Amey to Balfour Beatty (BB) . An extremely wet winter caused great damage and I have been persistent in my lobbying to get potholes repaired. Last November I brought in our MP and cabinet member to view the Old Cider House bank at Easthampton which was particularly bad and managed to get that resurfaced in December. This April we have saw BB appoint Vince Playton as our locality manager and I have already been out with him and have arranged a meeting with all Parish Chairs and Clerks later this month.

The Council has put in the budget 15 million pounds for highway capital works this year plus Government grants of 3.8 m for the bad winter and an addition 3.5 million for repairs on Herefordshire's 2,500 miles of highways.

My concern is that with all this funding we get value for money and a proper job done. BB has since the start of their contract in September filled in over 25,000 potholes, estimate 600 miles of our highways are in red condition and 400 miles in amber. The Council has paid out £750,000 in claims.

This year savings to their 8 million pound revenue budget will mean verges cut only once, (junctions and bends will have extra cut) and amenity grass only three times in the year instead of seven. I am concerned about this and will be working with PCs to see if can get these areas transferred locally with a commuted annual sum. I will also want to see tighter co-operation between BB and our four Parish Lengthsmen on drainage issues.

In the meantime please keep reporting potholes or concerns to:-

streets@herefordshire.gov.uk or the telephone number 01432 261800.

Planning

Planning is a legal process based on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) set by the Government and the Core Strategy set by the local planning authority in our case Herefordshire Council. The Government has also added Neighbourhood Plans, which are worked up by the local community signed off by Parish Councils and a referendum in the Parish. The NP has to be approved by a Planning Inspector. Once this is done the NP joins the NPPF and Core Strategy in determining all planning applications in the future.

The Government is also introducing the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which is a charged based on square footage on all new residential developments. Local Parishes can keep 15% of this money (25% where they have a NP) as a contribution towards the strain of new housing on local infrastructure. This can include Schools, Highways and Community facilities.

Currently the Core Strategy is going out for its final consultation before being submitted to the Inspector for his approval. It includes a proposal to build a bypass around Hereford City that has considerable opposition.

On Neighbourhood Plans, Lyonshall are one of the most advanced NPs in the County, Pembridge will launch their consultation at the annual Parish Meeting next week and Shobdon have just completed their very detailed Parish Plan. Titley Group have registered their interest in having a NP.

As the local County Councillor I am not directly involved with any of the NPs but I am very supportive of the process. Wherever you live I do urge you to become aware and contribute to this process it is so important to the future of our communities.

All communities have to grow and develop and this process allows us to have a stronger influence on how that should happen. We need in particular to think about homes that the economically active can afford and homes that are designed for longer living needs of our most mature residents. From 1996 to 2011 Pembridge Parish has 79 new houses, Shobdon over 100, Lyonshall 18, and the Titley Group 21.

I have some concerns about the CIL and the scale of the charge, and the way it was propose to zone it with higher charges in some parishes than others.

South Shropshire Housing are building eight affordable homes in Lyonshall, four for rent and four for part ownership. If you know anyone with a local connection please contact me. If you are thinking of any type of planning applications you need to be aware that the Council offers pre discussions for applicants with the Officers but makes a Charge for this. Our local planning officer is Philip Mullineux and can be contacted on pmullineux@herefordshire.gov.uk

Council's Budget

The Economic crisis of 2008 brought a degree of National debt that as a population will still do not understand or comprehend. Six years on Public services still face unprecedented challenges. Rising demand, changing demographics, Government reductions in support mean increasingly stretched finances with stark choices for local authorities and public services. They have to change the way they work or face service reductions and perpetual crisis management.

As a result services are being reduced or removed entirely, greater efficiencies and improved productivity sought and changes to eligibility criteria in efforts to reduce costs.

While these measures will realise immediate and substantial savings they do not provide the long term answers to the demands of the future.

Future demands will not only outstrip current supply but are likely to overwhelm public agencies with a set of needs that do not correspond to the service models of today.

These problems are compounded in authorities like ours where we need to deliver services over a vast geographical area and have national funding models that are urban based. I continue to work with other rural representatives across England in getting a better deal for rural communities and services.

In Herefordshire in addition to previous reductions over the last three years the Council's draft medium term plan indicates a need to make £32.3 million worth of savings in the next four years as indicated below.

In	2013/14	£12.9 million
	2014/15	£14.7 million
	2015/16	£8.2 million
	2016/17	£9.4 million

These figures assume a 1.9% Council Tax increase each year, 1% pay rises and will mean the Council's total budget will fall from 150 million in 2013/14 absorb all additional social care costs and be 140 million in 2016/17.

Health

Following concern raised by residents, I worked with Pembridge Parish Council and we invited Allan Lloyd from Kington who is the local representative on Herefordshire Healthwatch to attend the last meeting. Healthwatch is the statutory body that legally holds the local NHS and social services to account.

The meeting was attended by 55 people which in itself made an impression. Allan Lloyd helpfully outlined the work of Healthwatch and the main issues facing the local NHS.

Due to our lack of population and the current national funding models favouring more urban centres, our County Hospital will always struggle to meet financial and clinical targets. In the past year it had to receive a 9 million pound injection from the NHS to balance. But our geographical position means that we will always require an A&E and General Hospital but we will need the support of the local GPs and the continued flow of patients from Wales. He outlined the new cancer facilities recently established at the Hospital and the great difference it makes in saving people travelling to Cheltenham.

There are 24 Doctors Practices in Herefordshire and currently there are 12 GP vacancies, two of which are in Kington. Herefordshire recently won a 12 month contract from Government to extend surgery opening hours 8am to 8 pm seven days a week.

The Pembridge surgery opening hours is open proportionally with the patients that are registered there.

The broad consensus of opinion was that people were happy with the clinical and medical service that they received from Kington practice but concerns were raised about procedures, management and communications.

There is a Patients Forum that meets with the Practice, and I will work with them to publish more widely their work and improve the two way communication with the Practice. Mr Lloyd will take these matters back to Healthwatch discuss with the practice and reply later this month.

Schools

All our local schools are performing well with numbers at both our local Primary schools looking strong. Sadly Miss Finney will be leaving Pembridge as Headmistress at the end of the summer term after 15 years at the school.

During the year the Council consulted on changes to school transport which would have had a huge impact on our local schools. This has been stopped for the time being. My own view is that we need a more locally based solution which deals with the three mile/ over eight issues and works for the benefits of pupils, parents and the schools. I will not support a blunt move to the nearest school.

Economy

The importance of having local decent paid employment should never be forgotten. Our communities will only survive if they are economically active. Kingspan and Lynhales remain by far our largest employers in the ward. I continue to lobby on behalf of businesses and residents on improved Broadband. The contact with BT aims to deliver faster broadband to 90% of residences in the County by December 2016 and I have concerns about the speed of enabling our Exchanges and the ability to reach remoter locations.

The 90 million pound 80 week redevelopment of the Old Market was completed this month and Waitrose, Debenhams, and others opened on 1st May. The new six screen cinema will open on the 22nd and with toilets, car parking, easier access to the rest of the City Hereford can really start to promote itself as a retail centre. I have been involved with the scheme for over 10 years and am pleased to see it finally completed.

2015 ELECTIONS

The Boundary Commission has confirmed the new electoral arrangements for next year. The number of County Councillors will reduce from 58 to 53 and our ward will be extended to include Eardisland Parish and will be named **Arrow**. I intend to offer myself for re-election as your County Councillor next May.

It is a great pleasure to be the local County Councillor for the Parishes that I have known all my life and to represent the concerns of my local residents. Each month I send out an email update to all local residents and attend as many Parish meetings and community events as I can during the year.

Can I place on record **my thanks** to the support I receive from the local community in particular my Parish Councils, their Chairmen and Clerks.

The next twelve months again look very challenging in public services and everyone needs to be realistic and remember the best interests of the people, businesses and communities of Herefordshire.

Cllr Roger Phillips

Councillor for Pembridge, Shobdon, Lyonshall, Titley, Staunton on Arrow, Knill, Rodd, Nash & Little Brampton.

14. Next Meeting Arrangements

Wednesday 6th May 2015 (Unless it has to be changed because of the Local Elections).